It was my first day of baseball practice after being recruited by Coach Tim, a grumpy, short, alcoholic with so many wrinkles you could never finish counting them. I was recruited from the softball team at the very same high school. My softball team was considered the worst team in the league, but we had the most passionate, incredible softball players. We just had a hard time working together to get a win. We had all the pieces to the puzzle but could not figure out how to fit them properly together. When I was recruited for the baseball team and accepted the invitation, I did not tell anyone except for my parents at first. I knew how the softball girls would react. Once I got the courage to tell my team, every girl on the softball team shunned me for leaving. They saw it as weakness for me to leaving thinking I left for the fact of us losing all the time, but I wanted to show a strength for women of the softball community. I wanted to show that we can do anything a man can do. They never gave me a chance to explain after I quit. I decided to just show them instead of explaining. I accepted my spot as a catcher on the baseball team, and where I stood with the softball players. I did not let it get to me for the fact I was standing for something bigger and hopefully they would understand later.

Right as the bell resonated through the school for the day to end, I went straight to my beat up, green Wrangler to ride around to the fields. I got out of my sorry excuse for a car hesitantly, for the fact that I would have to walk past the softball fields to get to the baseball ones. As I approached the softball fields, I could feel the disappointment in the air like a punch in the face. I did not have to look at any of them to feel what they were feeling towards me. I finally made it past the softball fields, after practically being beat to the ground from the glares from my old team. I made it to where my practice was going to be for the next season. I took one look at the baseball field and could not believe how pristine it was. There was the smell of fresh cut grass in the outfield, the way the grass looked like a checkerboard, the clay colored dirt floating slightly above the field from just being dragged, while the sprinklers mist was hitting my face. It was extremely different from where I used to stand. I used to step on a field that felt like a rock. The grass never grew back it was too far dead and did not have any fancy water system to keep the field wet. It was different, I saw the bias against women’s sports right before my eyes. I looked past it because I knew why I was there.

Before we warmed up, we stood in a circle and the wrinkly man introduced me to everyone with his breath reeking of whiskey. We then took our positions in the perfectly dragged infield to take some ground balls. After taking infield, we took about ten minutes to just hit a couple balls from the front toss net. The guys were having practically a “who can hit it the farthest contest” and I was the next contestant. I stepped up to the plate and looked towards the pitcher. He threw the ball in what felt like slow motion. I swung my bat and completely missed the ball. Every guy laughed and one yelled “I knew a girl could never hit a baseball.” I have never been more embarrassed. After I finished my round of hitting, I was the last batter and it signaled the end of practice. They all went to pack up their gear, except for me. We had our first season game in less than a week, and I wanted to be able to show what I know I could do at the plate.

I set up a tee after everyone left and hit ball, after ball, after ball, until my arms felt as though they were going to fall right off. I was hitting my last ball and I hit it into foul territory outside of the fence. The baseball field is surrounded by woods because it is the farthest field from the school. After picking up the balls in the field I ventured out into the woods where the foul ball had landed. Right before going in I heard my name called by the tipsy, old coach. I guess he stayed to watch me hit off the tee. He yelled across the field “Be careful going in those woods! There is crazy magic in there!” I laugh awkwardly at his strange joke about the woods. Maybe the whiskey was getting to him.

As I head into the dense, greenery filled woods I get this strange feeling but shake it off. After looking for about ten minutes, I cannot seem to find the ball anywhere. I decided to turn around not worrying about losing one ball. When heading back through the dense woods I see something glowing underneath a pile of mossy leaves. I go towards the strange glow underneath the green moss of the forest ground. I lift the moss to find a glowing blue stone. I look around confused, seeing if maybe the glow was a reflection from the sun but there was no sun coming through the top of the trees. I did not know if I should keep it or put the strange, radiating light stone back. After some though, I decided to keep the stone so I could investigate it when I got home. I headed back to the field to pick up the rest of the gear. I grabbed my equipment, the glowing stone, and headed home quickly. I was so curious on what this stone was.

When I got home, I went straight to my room to look at the crystal I found in the woods. I sat at my desk and put it in the center of it and just stared at it as it glowed. I felt this strange energy resonate when I had it in my hands, but it felt like a strong one. I decided to make a necklace with the tiny stone that held, what seemed more strength than it could hold.

It was two days away from the first game of the season, so practices were getting more serious. This time I forgot to take my necklace off for practice like I usually would because I was so scared it would break if a ball accidentally hit it. We were having batting practice for the entire time and it was my turn to hit. As I stepped up to the plate everyone in the outfield moved in knowing I could not hit it that far or barely at all. The first pitch came down the middle and my bat made contact. I stepped out of the box to get some swings in and did not even look to where the ball went knowing it did not go far. I stepped back in the box and looked towards the pitcher waiting for the next pitch. Everyone’s jaws were practically on the ground. I looked around confused looking for an explanation from someone. The grumpy, alcoholic said in a slurred tone “Where did that come from?”

I had hit the ball over the fence. How? I looked down at the crystal and it was glowing more than usual. The crystal gave me some sort of strength. At that point I knew I had to wear it for the game in two days. It was the only way I could hit the ball to help my team win our first game of the season.

It was finally game day. The air smelled crisp, with the smell of fresh cut grass and cleanly dragged clay. The weather was warm with a light breeze. It was the perfect day for a baseball game. I had my crystal around my neck, and I was ready to show off my new strength at the plate. I could feel that it was going to be a great game. When I got to the field, we started to prep it before the other team arrived. After prepping the field, the other team arrived and we started to warm up. Once both teams were warm, we took the field first because we were home team. I was starting at the catcher position. As my pitcher was taking their warm up pitches before the inning started, I hear a voice that sounds familiar. I turn around towards the stands to see the whole softball team sitting there. My heart dropped. There was no way I could mess up now. I had to show them what I could do and why I was playing with the baseball team.

The inning started and the first batter was up. He was a short, skinny guy that looked like if he hit the ball he might break. I gave the call for my pitcher to throw a curve because he was so far from the plate. He seemed extremely nervous to be hitting. The batter swung and missed. I then called for a low inside ball. My pitcher wound up and he released too late causing the ball to hit the ground, so I had to block it. I blocked the ball and heard a shatter. The ball hit the crystal. I sat there not knowing what to do other than grab the baseball and throw it back to the pitcher. All I could focus on was how I would not be able to hit the ball when it was my turn to hit. I finished the inning with my nerves at the highest they have ever been, knowing I was the in the batting lineup.

I am sitting in the dugout waiting to get my award for “most embarrassing moment of my life.” While I was stuck in my head someone yells my name to tell me I am up to bat. I quickly grab my bat and drag it behind me to the plate. I slowly step into the white box that can make some feel confident but for me it was like I was in the box of shame. I put my bat above my shoulder waiting for the pitcher to throw the ball. The pitcher winds up his arm, I take a deep breath and the ball is out of the pitcher’s hand, coming right down the middle of the plate. I wait for the perfect timing and swing the bat. I miss by a mile. I hear faint murmurs from the stands and an outfielder say “Move in! Easy out.” I step out of the box knowing this is not going to end in my favor. Before I step into the box, I hear the disappointed, group of shunners, clap for me and give me words of encouragement. I look at them with a smile, knowing they still had my back. I step back into the box with determination. I plant my feet with confidence and watch every move the pitcher makes. He winds up again. I watch the ball leave his hand in what seemed like slow motion. It comes down the middle, and I can feel that this is my pitch. I swing the bat as soon as it hits the perfect spot over the plate and the ball connects with my bat. I hesitate for a second out of shock. I start to sprint to first and watch to ball land over the center fielders head. I round first base as the outfielder is sprinting to get the ball and head to second base thinking, I can make it. It is now a race between the outfielder and I. My feet were practically off the ground I was running so fast, I did not want to get out. I am almost to second and so is the tiny, white ball that is about to determine if I am out or safe. It is going to be a very close call.

I slide into second with dirt surrounding the second basemen and I like an orange cloud. The second basemen had caught the ball right as I arrived at second and he tagged me, but it was still too close for either of us to know if I was out or safe. We both looked towards the umpire and he yells “SAFE!” I could not believe I did it without the crystal. I look towards the stands. The friends who were once disappointed in me, were jumping up and down with excitement for my miraculous hit. I realized in that moment that I never needed the crystal in the first place. I had strength within myself, all I needed was to find my confidence.

As the game came to an ended, we ended up winning ten to six. As soon as the game was over, I went to thank the softball players for coming to my game. I explained to them why I left to be on the baseball team, and they whole heartedly understood. The exclaimed how proud of me they were and they were going to continue to root for me at every game. I went on the tell them, how I am going to help them get the support they deserve and help get justice for the bias of sports at our school. I was so happy to finally have my friends back and ready to start the next chapter of helping women’s sports get the recognition they deserve.